



Unboxing Future of Work feat. Ema Roloff

Episode 3: Unboxing Change Management

[Audio Transcript]

Vijay 0:33

Hello all of you. Today I have Ema Roloff with me in our Unboxing Future of Work podcast. Ema, welcome to the show. It's great to have you. We are looking forward to having a very engaging dialogue with you.

Ema 0:45

Yeah, thank you for having me. It's a pleasure to be here.

Vijay 0:49

Thanks very much. So, Emma, we are talking to leaders like you who are really championing digital transformation, future of work for in enterprise and with every day keeping the people in the centre. I have some interesting questions lined up for you, some fun stuff for we the next 15 minutes or so. We can just do a one minute, introduction about you, how you got here, what are some of your passions and habits?

Ema 1:12

Yeah, so I am a sales executive with an organization called Navient. And we help our customers manage their information and their processes across the organization more efficiently. So really looking at things from the beginning of how your content is getting into the organization, potentially using intelligent processing to bring that in. Then looking at how those processes function with tools like workflow, case management, kind of

traditional BPM, to the spectrum of customer communication management and records management, and how are you being compliant with all the information and processes that you have. On the personal side, I have a five-year-old and a two-year-old who keep us very, very busy at home and make life a joy. Yeah. And that's me in a nutshell.

Vijay 2:09

Actually, right now I am hiding in my dungeon to take this. I'm doing this by closing the door and by not letting him in.

Ema 2:16

Yeah, I've been there. I had a meeting earlier this year where our five-year-old daughter, actually about a year ago, at her four-year-old birthday, got a Spider Man costume and broke in on the back of a video call that I had to show me that it had come in the mail. So, we've definitely had our fair share of that during the pandemic as well.

Vijay 2:36

That's fun. That's fun. So, Ema thanks for the introduction. And I know your favorite topic is change management and keeping human centric transformation. In that sense, what are the key drivers that you think are redefining the future of work, especially in digital transformation. What do you think is changing the paradigm? And what do you see future, will be looking like in the future of work?

Ema 3:02

Yeah, so I think we're in a really unique position today where the technologies that are available, I mean it's only going to continue to get better. But we're at a point where we have more tools at our disposal than ever before. But as you said, I am very passionate about change management being coupled with these technologies. Because even if you

have the best technology at your disposal, if you don't have adoption from the people that are involved in the process, or the right kind of change management processes operating in the background, you're really not going to be successful with that tool. And so, it's certainly not my saying, but it is something that I repeat almost on a daily basis, is this idea of making sure that your people are involved, that you're looking at the process end to end, and then bringing in the technology.

Ema 3:58

And of course, before you bring in the technology, you need to make sure that your tools have the right abilities to solve your problem. But you really shouldn't be leading with that technology. Because if you've chosen the right tool, the capabilities are going to be there. And it should really be driven by the people that are working in that process and then the process itself and making sure that you're taking friction out of that. So that, from my perspective, that is the secret sauce to success. Because again, even if you have that most powerful tool, if no one's using it, it doesn't matter. If they can't figure out, if they haven't been trained, they're going to find workarounds, and they're not going to use it. And it's not going to be a successful implementation. And we've all heard those horror stories of companies spending, hundreds of thousands of dollars on something and then having it die on the vine because there wasn't the adoption that was necessary to make it successful.

Vijay 4:53

You're absolutely right. Post-Covid with that we are seeing the change in the digital transformation side, especially, there's a lot more user centric, I would say empathy, it would be one of the keywords, where you think about users who think about what their experiences would be in terms of using this technology, what kind of support and assistance that they will need, you know, in adopting the technology, obviously.

Vijay 5:14

There's a lot of debate about AI, RPA, automation coming in and actually taking jobs. And so, when you put a debate between the way that we see at Techforce.ai is it's about augmentation than automation. So, what's your view about augmentation versus automation of technology? What do you think is the right mindset that we need to educate the users, educate the stakeholders about?

Ema 5:40

Yeah, so from my perspective, my job and I hope everybody that's in this industry has the same thought process, is to make the life of my customers, employees better and to make the user experience and the life as they're engaging with these brands better because of the use of this technology. So again, from my perspective, the people are at the centre of that. And to your point, that means that the user experience, whether it's your employees or your customers, is essential to your success. And that's really the goal of digital transformation to me is increasing or improving your user experience on the employee side and the customer side.

Ema 6:22

So, when I start to look at the idea of automation versus augmentation, and kind of which is going to win out, I truly do believe that there are some pieces and maybe 25 years from now I'll be eating my words, but I truly believe that there are processes and things that technology will never be able to replicate for us. And there will be some things that can be completely automated and operate autonomously without humans interacting with it the same way we do today. But that doesn't mean that there won't be humans servicing those processes in the background. That doesn't mean that there won't be new and different jobs

created by this happening. And to me, that's a sense of augmentation, because it's changing the way that we work.

Ema 7:14

I was listening to a Clubhouse conversation about AI a couple of weeks ago. And they made a really interesting point that the idea of a barista in a coffee shop was automated decades ago, I mean I have a coffee machine in my house, you can get a Keurig, you can get an espresso maker, you can do all of that. But I still, for some reason, multiple times a week, go to a coffee shop to pick up my coffee and talk to the person that's there. And they know me, and they know my kids, and they know the treats that they like when they come with me on the weekend. And there's something so innately human about that, that it's never going to be completely automated out. And that's the same thing, when you look at like customer service, or even on the sales side, there are bits and pieces of sales that are being automated out. And there's certainly parts of my job that I'd be happy to hand off to a bot or some sort of automation. But there's also pieces of trust and empathy and that type of thing where I just truly don't believe we're at the point where that's going to go away anytime soon. And so, to me that idea of which wins out augmentation versus automation, I do genuinely believe augmentation is the way that we're going to go. And whenever I have this conversation, I have like this little vision of a robot and a human holding hands. I like to think about that when I think about this question because I really do believe that the moving forward is going to be finding new ways to be productive and finding new ways to invent and create because I think that's innately human. We're just going to have different ways of doing it.

Vijay 8:54

Exactly. When we started Techforce.ai, the idea was augmentation equal to assistance plus automation. They're actually not versus. Augmentation can be automation because as you rightly said, you can delegate some work to your assistant, which actually does the work for you, does not mean the complete automation in some of the things. It might just assist you

to do that, it can engage with you, it can answer some questions, it can give you the knowledge that you need to perform your job in an international language. So that's what we always believe that assistance plus automation is equal to augmentation. Because that's much more powerful.

Vijay 9:28

So don't just automate but augment is my thought process. And they're not versus, automation is one of the pillars in the augmentation. How do you augment your employees with technology? So that's great. And you mentioned about, every department getting into this mindset, like, you know, you talked about the salespeople, customer service teams, and HR and Gartner famously calls CX and TX as two pillars into one new technology, right, that they're calling your TX, total experience. So, you got, you can't just separate customer experience and employee experience anymore. That was the trend but right now, if you don't bring together, if you don't take care of your employees, if you don't build processes with empathy and enablement for your employees, that's not that sometimes, you know, it's definitely going to touch your customer experience processes. And it will reflect. That's why I think total experience is a new way to look at the whole paradigm and build, make sure that you cater to both the stakeholders. With that thinking, how hard is it to do for enterprises? So, TX and EX if we bring in, you have multiple stakeholders, multiple leadership pillars like, we have a CFO organization, you have a CIO organization to enable centrally, and then you have CMO. And then you have the back office COO, and many other CXOs in our organization. And if you want to bring all these guys together, who do you think is the right champion? I would not say I know it's hard to call out who can champion this. But who do you think should take the driving seat. We have to do it together, we have to bring this CX and TX and enable, make sure that we augment everyone. Who could be one or two CXO that you would think of?

Ema 11:17

To your point, I don't know if there is a catch all title that works in every organization of who needs to lead this and champion it. Because my initial inclination is to say it needs to come from the CEO, from a cultural perspective, and to show that it is an organizational directive. But it doesn't do you any good for the CEO to say we are digitally transforming, if nobody down the next level, and overseeing these departments that are reporting up to the CEO believe in that vision. And so, to me, when you truly look at a transformed organization, it has kind of this ripple effect down to everybody. And that's really why I believe that change management is that that path to success within an organization going through transformation, because I would love to say it could start from the bottom and make its way up and have that be a super successful approach. Because your end users are saying we need this. But I've run into enough organizations where they don't have buy in at the top. And that's where the budget comes from. But then on the flip side, I've run into organizations where the leadership wants to change, but they have too much resistance at the bottom to make it happen. And so that's really where I think that the path to least resistance going through a transformation is having your leadership team across the board understand that this is an imperative strategy that the organization needs. And then a culture of innovation and a culture of autonomy within an organization that then allows for new ideas and flexibility and the opportunity to pivot we won't say fail, but the opportunity to try new things and see what works is really like the organizations to me that have the most success in terms of working within this new paradigm. And so again, starting at the top with that cultural belief, and then really making sure that you're managing that expectation throughout all the levels of the organization and giving people the opportunity to be involved in the process and ask questions and be honest and communicate about how your project implementations are going where you're running into challenges. What the success of the program will mean to every individual within the organization. And that is again, so I don't think that there's, if you had one person that was in charge of this and spearheaded this, I don't know if you'd be successful, I think it has to be something that is kind of innate to the core of the organization.

Vijay 14:23

Absolutely and as you rightly said, culture eats strategy for breakfast. It won't happen, you cannot just think, I want to do this transformation, I want to transform my organization, I want to transform my customer service, but just won't happen. Unless you really bring people together and say, this is why, this is how, it is what we will be doing. And, you know, and we'll make sure that everything is going to be fine. You know, it's a change, but it's everything is going to be fine. And we'll go through together, I think every leader is important.

Ema 14:51

And one other thing to add is, you know, if you had one leader, I know, I've heard HR, I've heard finance, and I don't disagree that those departments and those leaders need to be full heartedly in this. But one of the things that I have seen, and one of the challenges I continue to hear companies talk about is how difficult it is to prioritize and scale automation. And if you're managing it on a departmental level, even if you have the most inspirational forward-thinking leader in front of your organisation, or in front of your department, if you transform everything in one silo of your company, and everyone else is still outdated, that's affecting your department, and that's affecting your innovation and your ability to transform. And so, unless it is across the board within the organization, you're not going to have that full cultural shift to really reach that like Nirvana level of transformed.

Vijay 15:50

Exactly. And as we were just talking about the Total Experience. Processes cut across departments, right, and we can build silos, we can build these structures. And if you just do one part of the transformation, the rest of them become a bottleneck, then you're not going to make the experience better for either employees or the customer.

So that's good. I think as you said, it should be every leader driving top down and also

making sure from the bottom everybody's connected and very transparently communicated to about the change.

Vijay 16:17

Now, the fun stuff. Right, let's get to some quick questions - Your favorite book. Any book that has a special place in your heart or that you've read a lot.

Ema 16:28

Special place in my heart is probably the second Harry Potter book, the whole series. I'm like really staging myself as a millennial but I was never a reader. And I watched the first movie, my parents told me if I wanted to go see the second movie, I had to start reading the books. And from that point, I read it in one night which was unheard of for me at that point, and I have not stopped reading since. And so that, to me, is like this little special place in my heart is for that series.

Vijay 16:57

Which one is it, is it Azkaban or which one is that? The second one?

Ema 17:01

Chamber of Secrets.

Vijay 17:03

Chamber of Secrets. Yeah, yeah

Ema 17:04

Yeah

Vijay 17:06

Okay, your favorite mobile app.

Ema 17:08

Um, I think my Kindle app is where I spend most of my time going back to the idea that I read a lot. And now that Kindle is kind of linked up with Audible, I can listen to books while I'm driving, or walking and read when I've got the time to kind of sit down and dig in. So, I think if you looked at my screen time, that's where it's mostly spent.

Vijay 17:30

Okay, now the tough one. Favourite boss, they could be any boss you worked with so far.

Ema 17:35

Everyone's going to think I'm sucking up with this answer but it's probably my current supervisor. His name is Mark Miller. I've worked with him now for about seven years, I think, yeah, coming up on seven years. And we think about the world, both very similarly and very differently. So, it's a nice balance where we can challenge one another when we need to talk through problems but then we also really understand one another now.

Vijay 18:04

That's awesome. Having a favorite boss and current job is simple. As you know, a lot of people quit because of the company but because of the boss. So having a great boss and manager who is actually a mentor, and also a colleague is a great to get to have. Lucky you!

Vijay 18:19

We are done with your round, and you did amazingly well. Very diplomatically well.

Ema 18:25

Thank you.

Vijay 18:27

So, you've been a champion of change management. If I remember, earlier conversations, you talked about you came from a teaching background. Right. I know it's a very unique skill set. I would say one of the greatest soft skills that anybody can have in digital technology industry.

Vijay 18:38

And, with that, what do you suggest the future of work, and especially the kids that are joining the workplace, which is a little bit crazy or hybrid, we can call it anything right now. Good, bad, there are so many things going on. Right? What do you suggest, key advice to the kids? How do you navigate the career to succeed, to getting people who are successful in what they do?

Ema 19:12

Yeah, there's probably two main things that I would point out. And one is, try new things and challenge yourself. Because every single time that I have made a move that put me securely outside of my comfort zone, I can now reflect back and say, like, yeah, that was definitely the right choice to make. Or I learned something from making that choice, even if it wasn't the right one. So, you mentioned I was a teacher, I made a move from teaching to

the kind of the corporate world and then the move from the corporate world into technology sales. And both of those leaps felt very big to me at the time, and very intimidating. But they were 100%, the right choice for me to make.

Ema 19:58

On the flip side, recently in the last year or so, kind of stepping outside of my comfort zone and starting the video series and trying something new and experimenting with how I help people understand what I'm passionate about and educate people to get them on board with my master plan of change management. And I have really, really enjoyed the opportunity that I've had to make connections with people like you. Have really interesting and engaging conversations about something that, quite frankly, in my personal life, not everybody's as big of a digital transformation fan as I am. So being able to connect with likeminded people from around the world, that's been such a blessing for me. The other piece that I would say, and this actually comes from a conversation that I had recently with one of our employees who just graduated from college and has made her way into our organization. And it was this idea of having crucial and difficult conversations. And this idea when you're first starting out your career that they're comfortable, or you get good at them, and you don't get uncomfortable in your position as you get older. Everybody has things within their position that they struggle with, and everybody has areas for improvement. And just because you're starting out your career doesn't mean that that's any different than anybody that's been there for 10 or 15 years. So now that I've reached the point where I've been here for 10 years, I can securely say that there are times where I'm uncomfortable, or there's things that I have to prep myself for and get ready for. And it's kind of that idea of the imposter syndrome. When you're starting you feel that a lot. But that's no different than anybody else. And so just learning to challenge yourself and kind of push through that I think is going to be the biggest piece to finding kind of your groove and what works for you.

Vijay 21:46

Awesome, awesome. And these are very, very insightful advice. When people don't talk about this, people say learn a new technology, fine. Learn AI, learn that, learn this. You know, that's all good. I mean, that gives you a career. I mean I'm not denying the tech point but these soft skills have the foundation. If you start challenging yourself, you start being okay with being uncomfortable frequently, and then learning something new that will set you into a complete... it's a future of work skill, I would say. That can change, right? Tomorrow, today's one technology can become legacy. We went through CRM, BPMs, being the hottest of the technologies and people now consider them as legacy technologies. Right. Great, great to have that. And we all look forward to having a masterclass on change management from you, you should do that.

Ema 22:37

Well, thank you, maybe that'll be the next challenge.

Vijay 22:42

Doing a master class because it's a very, very niche and very important topic. And most people don't get it and people don't understand what change management is. It takes time for them to understand. That would be really something we look forward from you. With that, we'll sign off.

Vijay 22:56

Thanks, Ema. It was great having you and all the great conversations

Ema 23:02

Well, thank you for having me and I appreciate the opportunity to share my thoughts.

Vijay 23:07

Thank you!